TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

CARLOS BONIL

Beyond the Teeth

Photo: Yohan López

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April - July 2017

Lab 3

Carlos Bonil (b. Bogotá, 1979) is a multi-media artist who acts as an intermediary for a vast group of influences and skills: he moves through the worlds of visual arts, music, sound and the experimentation with analog electronic media and low tech. He comes in and out of these fields and glues them together, depending on the project, using reassembling, recycling and resemantization techniques. His work shows the multiple possibilities to expressively reinvent the material world with proposals loaded with intelligence, self-taught procedures, precariousness and humor.

Bonil's departure points are historically charged, obsolete objects, which he disassembles and rebuilds while exploring their poetic and sound-related possibilities, making them familiar but also unsettling. Following this path, Bonil has built over the course of many years different types of skeletons using spoons, knives, forks and similar plastic cutlery with which he creates mobile and immobile bone structures.

When gluing and putting together the diverse structures, the flatware becomes part of machinery, prostheses and decorative objects. These elements are a key material in Bonil's work because of their origin: they are made out of plastic, which comes from petroleum, the physical and chemical result of many years of degradation of living beings, and thus comes to life the analysis of many possibilities around technological obsolescence.

In today's society, teeth are an indicator of health and youthfulness, and also serve as means of expression and persuasion. In oral health advertising

campaigns, teeth are presented as the "doors to our hearts;" and a famous toothpaste commercial describes their importance by "uncovering the power of your smile," suggesting again that perfect teeth open doors. But historically, the significance of teeth is varied: ancestral tribes show their teeth like some animals do in order to show fearlessness, and use their opponents' teeth as accessories to demonstrate superiority as warriors.

Inspired by the idea of perdurability, and also by its contrary, disposability, this installation thinks about teeth as our own utensils for eating, but also as the bones with the shortest life span.

Teeth are more than this group of symbols: they are essential for feeding and useful for phonation. The fact that in humans teeth fall off somewhat early shows an evolutionary deficiency that has not been genetically controlled. Consequently, there is an ongoing emergence of oral care products and a proliferation of health clinics that restore, partially or completely, the missing teeth. The artist has witnessed this phenomenon from different perspectives as his sister is, in fact, a dentist, his mother a dental technician and his father, like many close relatives, has been subject of dental restoration procedures.

This installation is a representation of a primitive state of speech, a test phase of the archaic technology that is the voice. Putting in noises what should be expressed in words is a break from convention, which reveals the absurdity of spoken language as a narrative thread of reality. *De dientes para afuera* inspects the inner mouth space and places the viewer in a sound atmosphere: a halitosis-free inner oral place.

Here, the 32 adult teeth, including the feared wisdom teeth, release sound modified by light sensors that receive the signal of an animation projected onto a screen facing the denture. The movements on the screen expand and diminish its brightness, which directs, at the same time, an interactive polyphonic sounds piece. Far from the utopic technology, it is a toothed machine that created a chaotic mass through the evocative power of objects, sound and images.

Many of the elements that make up the installation have already appeared during the artist's trajectory, making this installation a summary of his work to date.

Carlos Bonil has a M.A. in visual arts from Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Among his recent exhibition are: *Bien Mostrenco*, Valenzuela Klenner (Bogotá, 2016); *Nada a la vista*, La Usurpadora (Puerto Colombia, 2015); *Restos*, Río 52 (Mexico City, 2010), and *¿Puedo hacerlo yo?*, Valenzuela Klenner (Bogotá, 2007). He has participated in group shows such as ARCO Colombia (Madrid, 2015); *Bogotápolis*, Stenersen Musset (Oslo, 2013), and *Imaginary Homelands*, York University Gallery (Toronto, 2012). Bonil is included in *Younger than Jesus: Artist Directory*, a publication edited by Phaidon. He participated in the 44 Salón Nacional de Artistas.

Of importance is his participation since 2002 in the AC and DC (noise) project with Andrés Vilá, and in the band Mugre with his brother Germán Bonil. Both of these projects can be experienced in the upcoming concert at MAMM on April 28th.

Installation of the exhibition in Lab3. Photo: Yohan López

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